

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES BOOKLET

INTRODUCTION

Sexually transmitted diseases are those diseases which are spread by very intimate physical contact, usually through anal, oral or vaginal sexual intercourse. Some STDs are spread by skin-to-skin contact.

In the past, sexually transmitted disease (STD) was called venereal disease (VD). Most people thought VD meant only gonorrhea and syphilis. So the terms STDs or STIs (sexually transmitted infections) are now used to include those diseases which are passed from person to person by sexual or close physical contact.

Anyone who engages in intimate physical contact can get STDs and pass them to another person. If mothers are infected, even an unborn fetus can get STDs. People can have more than one STD at a time.

STDs are caused by viruses (HIV, hepatitis B, genital warts, herpes), which can be treated or prevented, but not cured. Bacteria (chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis) cause STDs. And, these STDs can be cured. Small creatures such as scabies and lice, which live on the surface or just below the surface of the skin, or “trich” which lives inside the body, are STDs as are many other organisms.

This booklet talks about different types of STDs. It answers some questions about how STDs are prevented and spread, cured or treated. Most important, it tells of the many STDs that have very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

PREVENTING STDS

The best way to prevent STDs is to avoid sexual contact with infected people. One sure way to do this is ABSTINENCE. Abstinence means not having sex with anyone. Sexual fidelity is another way. This means having sex with one (uninfected) person who has sex only with you, as in marriage. If a couple practices sexual fidelity and they have no STDs to begin with, they will not be infected. Or, if they did have one or more STDs in the past, they will not get new infections.

People who choose not to abstain or practice fidelity must be responsible for protecting themselves and others from infection. Knowing the right way to use latex condoms and using them from start to finish every time you have sex can help prevent the spread of infection. Though not 100% effective, condoms are the best protection IF risk behavior occurs.

When people drink or do drugs it is hard to make safe choices about having sex. Not using alcohol or drugs before having sex is a very important part of preventing STDs. Unless all your sex partners are tested and treated for an STD, you can get the disease again. A person who tells you that you need to be tested for STDs is honest, smart, and concerned about health. Thank the person and get tested and treated.

SOME WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM STDS

- Abstinence
- Know that many STDs have no symptoms
- Know that you can have more than one STD at a time, some with symptoms, some without
- Know that many kinds of birth control do not prevent infections – you must use condoms (rubbers) along with birth control
- Know your partners – go with them for STD and HIV tests
- Be sure ALL sex partners are examined and treated if STD infection occurs
- Have fewer sex partners
- Don't get drunk or high before having sex
- Don't use IV street drugs – never share needles
- Learn how to talk about condoms with all your sex partners
- Learn the right way to use condoms
- Use a new latex condom every time you have sex

HIV/AIDS INFECTION (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)

AIDS is caused by a virus called Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). It is spread when blood, semen or vaginal fluids of a person who has the virus get directly into another person's body, usually during sex or by sharing needles. A baby can get it from a mother who has the virus.

HIV can get into another person's blood system through tiny breaks in the skin. Sores and the thin, wet skin near the sex organs make it easy for the virus to get into the body.

Since 1985 the hospital blood supplies in the U.S. have been tested and protected from HIV. Clean needles that are used at U.S. blood donation centers are used only one time and disposed of carefully. They have NEVER spread HIV. But, needles that have been used by people with HIV for shooting drugs CAN cause infection.

HIV spreads because people can have it for many years without looking or feeling sick. Ten or 15 years may pass before HIV causes the group of diseases known as AIDS. Meanwhile, people with HIV can give the virus to sex partners and to anyone who shares their needles.

The virus slowly attacks white blood cells which are part of the body's immune system. White blood cells fight off germs. When the immune system is weak, harmful germs can take over. These are the called "opportunistic infections." They take the OPPORTUNITY to increase and grow when the body cannot fight them. These infections can lead to AIDS, which is a VERY LATE STAGE of HIV infection.

What are the symptoms of HIV/AIDS?

Most people with HIV have none. They feel fine for years. The first set of symptoms may include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, severe weight loss, sweating at night, diarrhea, swollen glands, cough, sores, and yeast infections. People who have any symptom for more than 2 weeks should see a doctor.

Is there a test?

There are several tests. The most common shows if a person has ANTIBODIES to the virus. In other words, the test shows that a person has been infected because the body is trying to fight the disease. It produces antibodies to try to do this.

What is the treatment?

Some people take medicine that can help the immune system. Some get treated for infections that can affect the lungs. Pregnant women with HIV can take certain drugs that improve the chances they won't give HIV to their babies. New treatments are announced often. If you have HIV, talk with your doctor about any new treatments and how they might help you. There is no cure for AIDS at this time.

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS (Gardnerella, haemophilus, vaginitis, “BV”)

Bacterial vaginosis or “BV” is a very common vaginal infection. Unlike most other STDs, it is caused by more than one kind of bacteria. It can be passed from one person to another during sex, but you don’t have to have sex to get BV.

Having BV means that the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina is upset. This can happen naturally or it can be caused by taking medicines that kill normal as well as harmful bacterial and yeast.

Be sure to tell your doctor if you have been treated for ANY kind of infection.

What are the symptoms of BV?

There may be a thin, watery discharge that is slightly gray or yellow. There may be a fish-y odor. Many women say they notice the odor after sex. About half of all women with BV do not feel, see or smell anything.

Is there a test?

Yes. A swab is used to get a sample of vaginal fluid. The test is quick. If you or your partners have had a new sex partner since your last exam, get tested for other STDs. Go together. You can have more than one STD at a time.

Is there a cure?

Yes. If you have BV, pills or creams with just the right drugs are used. Don’t take over-the-counter drugs and don’t use douches. Curing BV means that the vagina is in balance. The fish-y odor most women hate goes away.

If you have other infections, it may be wise to cure them first. Then, getting back to just the right vaginal balance is the next goal. You and your doctor need to work out a plan.

Some drugs used for BV must not be taken with alcohol and must not be used during pregnancy. About 20% of all women with BV will have it more than once. So far, treating partners has helped very few people. Not having sex until your symptoms of infection go away is the best way to clear up BV.

Is BV serious?

Doctors are concerned about the association of BV and premature or low birth weight babies. The bacteria that cause BV are sometimes found in the lining of the uterus and tubes of women who have pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). It is not known if bacterial vaginosis is a direct cause of PID. Caution Some medications for BV are oil-based and might weaken condoms or birth control diaphragms.

CANDIDIASIS (yeast infection, monilia)

Yeast overgrowth is a common vaginal problem. Yeast is part of the balance of normal skin in the vagina, penis and anal area. Sometimes too many yeast cells grow because the bacteria that keep them in check have been destroyed. When this happens, we say that there is a yeast “infection” or overgrowth.

Most of us are born with yeast on and in our bodies. It is not always sexually transmitted.

When antibiotics are given to treat STDs or other diseases, this can upset the normal vaginal balance and cause a yeast infection. Hormone changes during pregnancy, use of birth control, and menstruation can also cause yeast to increase. High blood sugar (diabetes) can be another cause.

It is not known if vaginal douches, perfumes, soaps, non-cotton fabrics, tight clothing or tight underwear affect the vaginal balance. Most women with the symptoms of yeast infections need to avoid all of these in order to avoid pain during this infection.

What are the symptoms of candidiasis?

Women complain of itching, redness and burning. Painful urination and a dry or painful feeling during sex may be noticed. If there is a discharge, it can look like cottage cheese.

Is there a test?

Yes. One can be done right away. Other kinds of tests must be sent to the lab. It is very important that tests for other STDs are done at the same time.

What is the treatment?

The goal is to bring back a balance among all yeast and bacteria that are needed for a normal vagina. This is hard to do, so plan on working with your doctor on a treatment plan that is right for you. If you are being treated for other STDs, you may have to think about finishing that treatment first, then working on a healthy yeast balance.

Male partners of women with yeast overgrowth are not usually treated. But, they should be checked for STDs and signs of yeast infection.

One problem with buying yeast treatments without having a medical checkup is that another disease may be causing the yeast overgrowth. Get tests for you and your partners first. Then talk about treatment with your doctor. A yeast infection may have to be treated more than once. Be patient.

Caution

Some yeast creams are oil-based and might weaken condoms or birth control diaphragms.

CHLAMYDIA

Chlamydia is a very common STD. It is also one of the most serious. It is caused by bacteria (germs) passed from one person to another during sex or from mother to baby during birth. It should be treated at once.

If it is not treated, both men and women risk becoming sterile. The tiny tubes of the reproductive system can become scarred and blocked as the body fights this infection.

What are the symptoms?

Most people who have the disease have no symptoms. If symptoms occur at all, they begin 1 to 3 weeks after having sex with a person who has the disease.

Some men may have slight discharge from the penis or a burning feeling while urinating. Women may have a little more vaginal discharge than usual or very slight bleeding at times when this is not normal. A burning feeling while urinating, abdominal pain, or a low fever are other symptoms. More than half of all men and more than 70% of all women with chlamydia do not know they have this STD. This is a silent infection.

Is there a test and treatment?

Yes. The test can be done even when there are no symptoms.

A sample of genital cells is collected using a small swab. There is also a new urine test. Not all doctors test for chlamydia. Be sure to ask. Special antibiotics cure chlamydia.

What happens if I am not treated?

Untreated chlamydia is a major cause of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women. The germs go deeper into the body with each new infection damaging the reproductive system.

Epididymitis, an inflammation near the testicles, can be caused by chlamydia. It begins suddenly with fever, pain and swelling.

NGU (non-gonococcal urethritis) means that the tube (urethra) which carries urine from the body is inflamed. Chlamydia is a major cause of NGU in men.

Proctitis, an inflammation of the rectum, can be caused by chlamydia. Often it is not noticed until pain, discharge or bleeding occurs.

Babies can get eye, ear and lung infections from mothers with chlamydia.

Remember, you will get chlamydia again unless every one of your sex partners is treated and cured.

Douches and enemas can wash chlamydia and other germs deeper into the body. Don't use them without checking with your doctor.

GENITAL HERPES

Herpes is a common infection. It is caused by a virus. This virus can infect both the mouth and the genitals. Herpes Type 1 virus causes most oral infections. People call these “cold sores.” Type 2 virus causes most genital herpes. But both types can infect either place. Having one type does not mean that you can’t get the other. The virus is passed from the part of the skin that has the virus to skin that touches it. It can also travel in warm body fluids.

Sex contact when sores or blisters are present is one way to spread herpes. Doctors have warned since 1990 that herpes can be spread even if there are no sores. New research shows that about 70% of herpes is spread by people who do not know they have it. They do not have symptoms, or have very mild symptoms.

What are the symptoms of genital herpes?

If symptoms occur, they come 2 to 21 days after contact with a person who has the virus. Fluid-filled sores appear. They may itch, burn, tingle or cause pain. Flu-like symptoms are sometimes felt. The first outbreak of sores usually lasts 1 to 3 weeks. Then scabs form.

After the first sores heal, the virus stays hidden. More outbreaks may occur later – how often is different for each person. Later outbreaks have fewer sores. They heal faster, and they are less painful than the first time.

Women and herpes.

Millions of women with herpes have had healthy babies. If a woman or any of her sex partners has ever had herpes, she should be sure to tell her doctor. It can be very serious when a woman gets herpes for the first time while she is pregnant.

Is there a test?

Yes. Testing the sores when they are very new and full of clear fluid is easy and cheap. Other tests look for antibodies to herpes in blood.

What is the treatment?

There is no cure for herpes. Medicine your doctor can order may make the sores less painful and heal faster. There are 2 ways to take herpes drugs, so talk about a plan for treatment if you have more than 4-6 outbreaks a year.

Herpes and AIDS

Herpes sores are an easy way for HIV and other germs to enter a person’s body during sex. Never have sex when the sores are present. Correct condom use can reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of passing herpes to others when the infected area is covered by the condom.

GENITAL WARTS (HPV)

Genital warts, like warts on other parts of the body are caused by viruses that live in the skin. There are more than 130 types. Doctors call warts Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). The wart virus is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with someone who has it. Most people with this infection have **NO VISIBLE** warts --- yet they can infect others. Very rarely, mothers can pass the virus to babies during birth.

What are the symptoms?

Few people are aware of their infection. Genital warts can grow inside or outside the penis, on the cervix, in the vaginal area, in the anal area, on the thighs or anywhere in the genital region. Or, more rarely, they can grow in the mouth. Genital warts can appear weeks, months, or years after sex with an infected partner. Three months is average.

Warts can be soft, hard, raised, flat, small, large, single or grouped in clusters like a cauliflower. Warts can look darker, lighter, or the same as skin color. Don't treat warts with anything before going to a doctor.

Is there a test?

The doctor will look at the warts and do some tests. An STD exam should be done to be sure you do not have syphilis, herpes and other conditions that can look the same as warts.

Women must have a Pap test (a test for cancer) or other tests for HPV on a regular basis. Only a **FEW** women with certain types of wart virus in their cervix have the kind of cell changes linked with cancer. You must return for testing on a regular basis. Work out a plan with your doctor and stick to it.

What is the treatment?

There is no cure, but warts can be treated. About 25% of those who get treatment will have warts again within 3 months. About 20 to 30% of all warts go away without treatment. There are preventive vaccines for a few wart types.

You and your doctor need to talk about the best treatment for the kind of warts you have. Choices include freezing or burning the warts with special tools and surgery with or without lasers. For some people with external warts there is a choice to paint a medicine on the wart. This must be washed off at the exact time you agreed to do it. Some wart medicines must never be used by pregnant women or their partners. Tell your doctor if you or any of your partners are pregnant.

GONORRHEA “clap” “drip” “dose” “GC”

Gonorrhea is one of the most common STDs. It is caused by bacteria (germs). The germs die if exposed to heat, cold or drying. Gonorrhea is passed from one person to another during sex. This includes oral and anal sex. If no treatment is given, a person with gonorrhea can progress to have a type of arthritis or sterility.

A baby can get this disease from a mother who has it.

What are the symptoms?

A woman may have a discharge from the vagina, or a slight burning feeling when urinating. Often this is not noticed because it is so mild. Many women with this disease have no symptoms at all – about 50%. Without treatment, Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) may develop. PID is a very serious infection.

In men, symptoms usually appear in 2 to 8 days. Most common is pus dripping from the penis. Also, a burning sensation may be felt. Even if there are no symptoms, people can infect their sex partners.

In the throat, the germ may cause a dry, sore, scratchy feeling.

Gonorrhea infects the rectum during anal intercourse. It can also spread to rectum during vaginal intercourse when the bacteria travel in fluids to the anal area. Symptoms of rectal gonorrhea include discharge, itching, and sometimes painful bowel movements.

Is there a test?

For the right test, go to a medical clinic. A swab may be used to get a sample. There are also newer urine tests. A test is done even if there are no symptoms. Ask your doctor for a test each time you have a new sex partner. Both partners should be tested. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have had oral anal or vaginal sex.

What is the treatment?

Special antibiotics are used. They may be given as shots or pills. If the pills are to be taken at home, follow the treatment you talked about with your doctor. Don't stop taking your pills just because the symptoms seem to go away. Call your doctor if you have questions.

To prevent blindness, drops or ointment are put in a baby's eyes right after birth.

Having this disease once does not protect a person from getting it again. All your sex partners **MUST** get treatment even if they do not have symptoms.

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. It can be caused by many things including drugs, toxins and viruses.

Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver. Most people recover and their bodies get rid of the virus. But, hepatitis B may cause very serious liver damage or liver cancer.

The younger a person is when they get hepatitis B, the greater the chance they will have a long term infection. A person with long term (chronic) hepatitis B is said to be a “carrier.” A carrier of hepatitis B is a person whose body cannot get rid of the virus. It is carried in the blood, usually for a lifetime. Carriers may have no symptoms, yet they can spread the infection to others.

Pregnant women who carry this virus can pass it to their babies during childbirth. It is easy to get hepatitis B if you have sex or share needles with an infected person. Touching an infected person’s open sore or cut, sharing a razor, toothbrush or nail clipper can be a danger. Even tiny amounts of blood or other body fluids will spread the virus if direct contact occurs. Hepatitis B is not spread through food, water, or casual contact.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis B?

For many people there are none at all, yet they have the virus and can infect others. If symptoms occur, look for yellow color in the skin and eyes, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting stomach pain, joint pain, or extreme tiredness.

Is there a test?

Yes. A blood test is used to check for this disease.

What is the treatment?

There is no cure for hepatitis B, but there is a vaccine that prevents it. All babies as well as all young people should get hepatitis B shots. People whose behavior (high risk sex) , jobs (health care) or other factors put them at risk should also get the shots. There are new drugs, but no vaccine to cure long term infection.

What happens if I get hepatitis B?

The longer the virus is present, the greater the chance of liver damage, liver failure or liver cancer. See your doctor for tests if you think you or your sex partners may have this disease.

NGU (Nongonococcal Urethritis)

NGU is an inflammation in the tube (urethra) that carries urine from the bladder to the outside of the body.

NGU can be caused by several kinds of germs. All of the causes have one thing in common --- they start a process of irritation inside the urethra. This happens whether or not you can feel or see any symptoms of disease.

One cause is chlamydia. Another cause is germs from feces, which you can get from having anal sex. Herpes virus sores inside the tube can also cause NGU. There are long lists of germs that can cause this condition. There can be more than one cause.

As with other STDs, NGU is almost always passed during sex. This includes vaginal, anal and oral sex.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptoms are pain and discharge. They can be mild or quite strong. Not everyone has them. One partner can have symptoms while the other has none. Even if there are no symptoms, you **MUST** get treatment. Infections that have no symptoms can be dangerous. It is easier to get other STDs, including HIV if you have untreated infections.

Is there a test?

Yes. You must go to a medical clinic. Call first if you can. The reason is that for one of the easy tests, an early morning test is best. Other tests are done with tiny swabs. Samples from the urethra are sent to the lab. This is the only way to know the exact cause of NGU.

Is there a cure?

Yes. Most cases of NGU can be cured or treated.

You must take your pills exactly as agreed. Don't stop just because you feel better. Don't share your pills.

Unless all your sex partners are treated, you will get NGU again. Don't have sex until you and your partners have been treated and cured.

What happens if it is not treated?

This can lead to long term problems. Sterility is a major concern. The germs can travel deep into your body. The fragile tubes that connect and lubricate a man's reproductive system can get scars and close off.

PUBIC LICE (“crabs” Phthirus pubis)

There are three kinds of lice that can live on humans --- head lice, body lice and pubic or “crab” lice. Compared to other kinds of human lice, crab lice move slowly and cannot live more than 48 hours without drinking human blood. They go from birth to death in about 2 to 3 weeks. The female lays a lifetime total of about 30 eggs. The eggs hatch in 6 to 9 days.

How do people get pubic lice?

If you have sex contact with a person who has these lice, you will almost certainly get them, too. This is one STD, however, that people can get without direct sex contact. Sometimes the lice or their eggs land on beds, towels, or clothing when pubic hairs fall out. Lice cannot hop or fly. Lice always try to leave a person who has a fever – the human body is the wrong temperature when this happens, so they try to get away. The claws of pubic lice are adapted to the spacing and shape of coarse pubic hair. They can also live in hair in the anal area, thighs, armpits, eyebrows and lashes.

What are the symptoms of pubic lice?

Some people see the lice or eggs. The female louse uses a very tough, cement-like substance to glue her eggs, called “nits” to pubic hairs. The nits can remain long after the louse has hatched and moved away.

Some people have intense itching. Some begin itching at once, others have a delayed response --- as long as 30 days. Some people never feel anything at all. Itching can continue after both eggs and lice are dead. A few people get blue spots on their skin in reaction to the bites – they go away after a short time. Some people also notice tiny rust or blood colored spots in their underwear as a result of the bites.

Is there a test?

These lice are large enough to be seen without a microscope. Some people think they are seeing a moving scab or freckle. Colors vary. It depends on whether or not the louse has had a blood meal. People who have pubic lice should go to a doctor to be tested for other STDs.

What is the treatment?

Special shampoos, cream rinses, and lotions sold in drugstores are used. Talk with the pharmacist so you know that these products must be washed off a certain number of minutes after they are applied and can never be used near the eyes. There are special ointments used for lice in brows and lashes. Pregnant women, children under age 2 and people with broken skin cannot use lindane products. Be sure that everyone you have had intimate contact with in the last 30 days is treated or you will get crabs again. If itching continues for more than a week, a second treatment may be necessary. For washable clothing and bedding use the HOT cycle of the washer and dryer. Dry cleaning or removing items from body contact for 10 days will also kill lice eggs.

SCABIES

Scabies is a skin infestation caused by tiny bugs called “mites.”

When a mite gets on a new person it can crawl about an inch a minute to places it likes to burrow. Between the fingers, the wrists, armpits, breasts, genitals, skin folds, waist and toes are a few of the warm, moist places the mites like to live. It takes only 3 minutes for the female mite to burrow under skin. She spends her entire 30-day life there, laying 3 eggs a day. As she crawls about the burrows, she gives off a chemical. This chemical, NOT bites, causes the itching that can be a major part of having scabies.

What are the symptoms?

Itching, especially at night, is the first symptom. The FIRST time a person gets scabies it takes 2 to 6 weeks for the itching to start. The SECOND time a person gets scabies, it itching starts in one or two days. Scabies can look exactly like other skin rashes. Two people who have scabies might have very different reactions to the chemical given off by the mites. Their rashes won't look the same.

How do people get scabies?

Close contact, skin-to skin contact, including sex, with a person who has these mites is the main way to spread scabies. Mites can live for a couple of days in fabric and dust. The mites can be passed to others even if there are no symptoms.

Is there a Test?

Your doctor can take tiny scrapes of skin and look under a microscope for the mites.

What is the treatment?

All partners and household members must be treated. Special lotions that kill the mites and their eggs can be used. Follow the directions exactly. Be sure to put some lotion under finger and toe nails. Five percent (5%) permethrin cream (NOT the 1% used for lice) is recommended for scabies.

Talk to your doctor and pharmacist about treatments that are safe for you. Pregnant women, children under age 2, or people with very irritated skin, cannot use products containing Lindane. Do NOT use lindane products right after bathing. You may have to be treated more than once for scabies. Call your doctor if the itching does not stop one week after treatment.

For washable clothing, bedding, towels, rugs and toys, use the HOT cycle of the washer and dryer. Dry cleaning also works. Things that can't be put in hot water may be wrapped in plastic bags and sealed for 3-4 weeks. Without blood to eat, the mites will die and there will be no more eggs.

SYPHILIS (“syph,” “pox,” “bad blood”)

Syphilis is a very serious disease, Contact with the sores of an infected person during sex is the main way it is passed from one adult to another.

What are the symptoms? Many people do not notice any at all. 7bn

Primary stage: 10 to 90 days after sex (usually around 21 days) a painless single sore appears in the area where contact was made --- the penis, anus, cervix, and mouth are common. The sore, called a “chancre” (shan-ker) usually feels hard at the edges. It does not hurt. After 2-6 weeks, the sore heals with or without treatment. There may be more than one. If not treated, syphilis progresses to the Secondary Stage: 6-8 weeks later, the secondary stage begins. It can last from 2 weeks to 6 months. Symptoms include obvious or faint rashes (including palm of hands and soles of feet) which can spread the disease. Also, flu-like feelings, swollen lymph nodes, hair loss, or flat, gray warts. These symptoms go away in about 2 weeks. At this point serious damage that can’t be seen or felt begins in the heart, nervous system, kidneys, eyes, bones and brain. Early Latent (hidden) Stage: This stage lasts up to 1 year from the time of infection and has no visible signs, though the damage continues. Without treatment the disease goes to the Late/Late Latent (hidden) Stage: This begins after one year. While the disease can’t usually be spread during this period, silent damage goes on until treatment or death.

Syphilis can look just like herpes, warts, scabies, hemorrhoids and many other diseases. **Anyone with a single sore must be tested for syphilis.**

Is there a test?

Yes. There are blood tests to find the large spiral-shaped bacteria (spirochetes) that cause syphilis. The sores can also be tested. Tests may have to be done more than once. Every person treated for syphilis **must return to the clinic for more tests.**

What is the treatment?

There is a drug that cures syphilis. A **special** form of penicillin given as shots stops the germ. Given at any stage, the special drug prevents any further damage. But, after a person has been cured, they can get syphilis again if they have sex with an infected person.

What about women and babies?

Moms who get prenatal care are tested for syphilis. Both the mom and the fetus can be treated and cured during pregnancy. Treatment stops the damage. But, it must be repeated if the mom or her partners continue to have sex with infected people.

TRICH (Trichomoniasis, trichomonas vaginalis))

This common STD is caused by tiny parasites called protozoa. They live in the wet areas of the genitals of infected people – the urethra in men and the vagina in women. Trich is passed from one person to another during sex.

What are the symptoms?

Trich causes inflammation. The medical word ‘itis’ means inflammation. Vaginitis in women and urethritis in men can be caused by trich.

If there are symptoms, they usually come 4 to 20 days after contact with an infected partner. But the symptoms can come 6 months or even years after infection. Some people with trich have no symptoms, yet they pass the infection to others.

In women, look for a heavy yellow-green discharge, unpleasant odor, itching and a feeling of irritation in the vagina. Pain while urinating or having sex is another symptom. There may also be pain in the lower abdomen. As many as half of women who have trich have no symptoms.

Most men who are infected have no symptoms, but they can still infect their sex partners. There might be a thin clear or white discharge from the penis, or burning with urination or ejaculation. Men with urethritis can be tested for trich if other STDs are not found.

Is there a test?

Yes. The doctor uses a swab to take fluid from the vagina or penis, then looks for the 5 protozoa with a microscope. This test works about 65% of the time. A better test is a culture, but it takes longer and costs more. A pH test that is not normal is also a clue to finding trich in women.

Sometimes trich is found around cells taken for a Pap smear. Male semen can also be checked for trich.

Is there a cure?

Yes. Special drugs are prescribed. Pay attention to what is said about side effects. Pregnant women cannot use some drugs prescribed for trich. Be sure to tell your doctor if you are pregnant. Don't have sex until all partners are cured. Some people may have to be treated more than once. All partners must be treated even if there are no symptoms. This is very important.

Is trich serious?

There is no lasting damage, but women with trich may be more likely to have premature or low birth weight babies. In men, trich can irritate the prostate gland. For both men and women, an inflammation of the genitals can make it easier to get other STD infections. Get treatment right away.

WHAT ABOUT CONDOMS?

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Latex condoms when used consistently and correctly, are highly effective in preventing the transmission of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. In addition, correct and consistent use of latex condoms can reduce the risk of spreading gonorrhea, chlamydia and trichomoniasis. Some STDs can occur in areas of the body that are not covered by a latex condom. They are skin-to-skin contact infections. Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of genital herpes, syphilis, chancroid and genital warts only when the infected areas are covered or protected by the condom. The correct use of condoms has been associated with a reduction in the risk of genital wart-associated diseases such as cervical cancer.

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